

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

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FM AMEMBASSY BELGRADE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8389

USIA WASHDC

INFO AMCONSUL ZAGREB

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, OGEN, YO

SUBJECT: US MEDIA ON YUGOSLAVIA

REF: USIA 1899

1. PAO CALLED TO SECINFO TODAY FOR LONG PREPARED PRESENTATION BY ASSISTANT SECRETARY HUMO RE RECENT U.S. PRESS COVERAGE OF YUGOSLAVIA. HUMO BEGAN BY STATING CHARACTER OF COVERAGE RAISED QUESTION OF REASON BEHIND IT AND EFFECT ON BILATERAL RELATIONSHIP.

2. STATING THAT SUBJECT TAKEN UP RECENTLY IN STATE DEPARTMENT, HUMO MADE LONG POINT-BY-POINT REPRESENTATION RE SERIES BY PARKS IN BALTIMORE SUN. NOTED THAT SECRETARIAT HAD GIVEN PARKS ASSISTANCE IN APPOINTMENTS AND COVERAGE OF INTERNAL AND FOREIGN POLICY DEVELOPMENTS. CONCLUDED THAT PARKS MUST HAVE COME TO YUGOSLAVIA WITH "PRECONCEIVED NOTIONS" WHICH HE SOUGHT TO "LEND CREDIBILITY" THROUGH "FEW FAVORABLE STATEMENTS," PLUS QUOTING FROM "ANONYMOUS ALLEGED CONVERSATION PARTNERS." STRONGLY QUESTIONED PARKS' AND NEWSPAPERS' MOTIVES IN PUBLISHING SERIES. ALLEGED "INSULTING OF PRESIDENT TITO" WAS PARTICULARLY STRONG POINT REPEATEDLY MENTIONED. THIS CONNECTION, LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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HUMO OBSERVED THAT YUGOSLAV PRESS LAW PROTECTS CHIEF OF

STATE OF FRIENDLY FOREIGN GOVERNMENT FROM SUCH INSULTS.

3. WHILE COVERING PARKS SERIES IN GREATEST DETAIL, HUMO ALSO MENTIONED NEW YORK REVIEW AND NEW LEADER ARTICLES. BACKGROUND INFO PROVIDED REFTEL USEFUL AND APPRECIATED.

4. HUMO CONCLUDED BY NOTING SUCH COMMENTARY BASED ON "DISINFORMATION AND INACCURACIES" COULD NOT HELP GOOD RELATIONS WHICH DESIRED BY YUGOSLAVIA. HE EMPHASIZED FACT THAT "NO ANTI-AMERICAN CAMPAIGN WAS INTENDED IN YUGOSLAVIA" AND "THAT YUGOSLAV MEDIA MAKING FALSE ALLEGATIONS WERE WARNED BY SECRETARIAT OF LIABILITY UNDER PRESS LAW."

5. PAO CONCURRED THAT SUCH PRESS COVERAGE ON BOTH SIDES NOT IN OUR MUTUAL INTEREST. NOTED "MOMENTUM" WHICH NEGATIVE COVERAGE TENDS TO GENERATE AND EXPRESSED HOPE THAT MUTUAL "COOLING OF RHETORIC" MIGHT BE ACHIEVED, ESPECIALLY GIVEN POSITIVE DEVELOPMENTS IN MIDEAST. HOWEVER, RE NYR ARTICLE, EMPHASIZED TRADITIONAL AMERICAN SENSITIVITY TO ISSUE ACADEMIC FREEDOM. ASSURED HUMO OF OUR CONTINUED INTEREST IN CONTINUING GOOD BILATERAL RELATIONSHIP BASED ON JOINT STATEMENT OF TWO PRESIDENTS. AS POSSIBLE USEFUL STEP, SUGGESTD NON-POLEMIC LETTER TO EDITOR FROM NOVAKOVIC TO BALTIMORE SUN. OBSERVED WAS LUNCHING TODAY WITH SKRIJNAR, AUTHOR OF OFFENSIVE ARTICLE IN KOMUNIST, IN EFFORT TO ESTABLISH SOURCING AND CLEAR AIR RE FALSE ALLEGATION DIRECTED AT VOA.

6. WHILE REJECTING IDEA OF LETTER TO EDITOR, STATING YUGOSLAVIA HAS NO NEED "TO DENY SUCH FALSE CHARGES," HUMO WELCOMED RECOGNITION OF "MUTUAL PROBLEM" AND PAO OFFERED TO ASSIST WHERE POSSIBLE TO OBTAIN OBJECTIVE COVERAGE OF BILATERAL RELATIONSHIP AND OF YUGOSLAVIA. STATED DOORS OF SECRETARIAT "ALWAYS OPEN" TO U.S. PERMANENT AND VISITING JOURNALISTS TO ASSIST THEM IN OBTAINING MORE COMPLETE AND ACCURATE INFORMATION RE YUGOSLAVIA, AS WELL AS TO PAO FOR DISCUSSION OF MUTUAL PROBLEMS.
JOHNSON

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